

## United States Senate

July 16, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader McConnell,

I strongly supported your recent decision to cancel the August recess and keep the Senate in session through the summer. After all, Congress has a lot to get done, including holding the federal government accountable to taxpayers, investing in our schools, expanding access to broadband, strengthening small businesses and giving family farmers and ranchers the certainty they deserve. Chief among those priorities is doing absolutely everything we can on behalf of our troops, veterans and their families. That is why I respectfully urge you to bring the nomination of Anthony Kurta, President Trump's nominee for Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, to the Senate floor at the earliest possible opportunity.

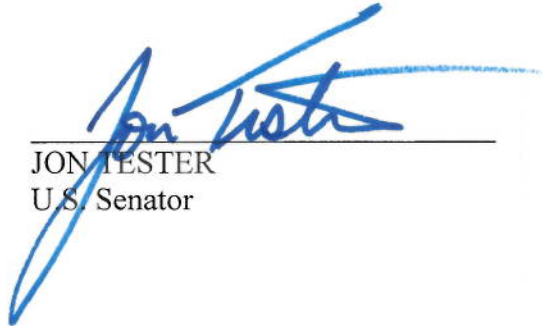
As you know, the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness plays a critical role in the execution of our national security priorities, and on behalf of our warfighters, their families, and our nation's veterans. More specifically, the position is tasked with responsibility over such priorities as force readiness and training, total force management, family support programs, collaboration between the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans' Affairs, and resiliency programs such as sexual assault prevention and response and suicide prevention efforts. Further, the Deputy Undersecretary has authority and control over four defense agencies; the Defense Health Agency, Defense Human Resources Activity, Department of Defense Education Activity, and Defense Commissary Agency.

Despite its responsibility for such high priority matters, the Office of Personnel and Readiness has been unduly hampered from carrying out its mission because of rotating senior leadership for several years. In fact, since January 2009, the Defense Department has had nine Under Secretaries of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. The most recent individual to hold this position is the expected nominee for Secretary of Veterans Affairs, leaving a tenth vacancy for this senior executive position in ten years.

Mr. Kurta is a Montanan and Naval Academy graduate who served 32 years as an active duty Naval Surface Warfare Officer before retiring at the rank of Rear Admiral. His nomination passed out of the Armed Services Committee by voice vote on November 16, 2017, and has been awaiting a confirmation vote for more than 210 days. Nevertheless, his nomination continues to languish at a time when the Office of Personnel and Readiness needs proven and permanent senior leadership to more ably carry out the critical mission with whom it has been entrusted.

I appreciate your consideration of my request and urge the Senate to move forward as expeditiously as possible on the Kurta nomination. It is the least we can do for our men and women in uniform, their families and our nation's veterans.

Sincerely,



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JON TESTER  
U.S. Senator